Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Infrastructure

6.16 This policy supports the positive approach to renewable and low carbon energy schemes in PfE policy JP-S2 and sets the local requirements that will be assessed in considering development proposals. For heat and energy networks, proposals are expected to meet the criteria contained in PfE Policy JP-S3 and sets out further local information.

Policy S3: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Infrastructure

Proposals for renewable and low carbon energy developments, including micro-renewables, will be supported providing there is no unacceptable impact on:

a. Local amenity including noise, vibration, light, air quality, dust and visual impact
b. Highways, air traffic safety and telecommunications
c. Landscape character
d. Heritage assets and their setting
e. Biodiversity and geodiversity
f. Water resources and flood risk
g. Open space
h. Public rights of way and recreation

Where there are landscape impacts, these should be minimised and appropriately mitigated against. Applications should be accompanied by a detailed Landscape Impact Assessment and take account of any Landscape Character Assessment at a borough or Greater Manchester level.

Applications for renewable energy schemes should look to deliver multiple benefits where possible, such as for habitats and agriculture.

Proposals should include details of the arrangements for decommissioning and restoration of the site at the ends of its operational life.

Heat Networks

The following areas have been identified as planned heat and energy networks in the borough. Further areas will be defined as projects are progressed and evidence updated.

- Rochdale Town Centre Heat Network

In areas identified as a Heat Network Zone major development proposals will be expected to connect to an existing or planned network, where feasible and viable.

Places for Everyone Links:
Policy JP-S2 Carbon and Energy
Policy JP-S3 Heat and Energy Networks

Reasoned Justification

6.17 Increasing renewable energy generation is essential to achieving the transition to a low carbon economy and meeting carbon reduction targets. It can also boost energy independence, reduce energy bills and support high-skilled jobs. This can be either on large stand-alone schemes, or micro-schemes added to individual buildings. There are already major renewable energy developments in the borough, with nationally significant onshore wind schemes situated at Scout Moor (65MW) and Crook Hill (37.4MW). In 2023, a large solar development at Chamber House Farm, Heywood opened, generating up to 5.5MW of electricity.

6.18 While the benefits of renewable energy are recognised it is important that they do not have an unacceptable impact on the environment and maximise opportunities for enhancements where possible. Well-designed renewable energy developments can deliver biodiversity enhancements and other environmental benefits e.g. ground-mounted solar arrays can provide an undisturbed area to support a variety of species. They can also retain agricultural uses such as grazing of livestock.

6.19 The Rochdale Local Area Energy Plan (2022) produced a high-level screening exercise to assess potentially suitable sites for renewable energy development in the borough based on several land use constraints. Further assessment would be required to consider the site in detail including the impact of large-scale renewable developments on grid constraints. Smaller scale renewable energy projects at site and building level will also play an important part in the energy transition.

Heat and Energy Networks

6.20 Heat and Energy networks are expected to play a significant part in reducing carbon emissions, with the Rochdale Local Area Energy Plan (2022) stating that district heating could supply in the region of 21% of Rochdale's dwellings.

6.21 PfE Policy JP-S3 sets the requirement for new development to connect to existing or planned heat networks and identifies broad 'Heat and Energy Network Opportunity Areas'. It notes that these will be further refined by districts when more local evidence becomes available. The Rochdale Town Centre Heat Network is now progressing, and as such, it is essential that development in this area can connect to this where feasible.

Heat Network Zones

6.22 A national zoning model (NZM) is being developed to support and inform heat network zoning policy by identifying potential heat network zones across England. These are areas where heat networks are expected to be the lowest cost, low carbon heating solution to buildings.

6.23 Indicative zones from the fifth national model run of the in-development NZM are shown in Figure 3 below. These zones must be understood to be "work in progress" and should not be used for local decision making. The NZM is still under development, and the outputs are subject to change ahead of zoning policy launch. Furthermore, the NZM is only the first step in identifying areas where heat networks are expected to provide the lowest cost option for decarbonising heat. The outputted zones will then undergo

refinement to account for local factors, and public consultation before formal designation.

Figure 3: Extract of Heat Network Zoning Map: Greater Manchester (Indicative zones)